



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program



Since 1990, when Congress passed the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with coastal States to acquire, restore, manage or enhance coastal wetlands through a matching grants program. To date, \$165 million have been awarded to 25 coastal States and 1 U.S. Territory, and more than 200,000 acres of coastal wetlands have, or will be acquired, protected or restored.

Why Protect Coastal Wetlands?

Coastal wetlands are valuable resources. They protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide habitat to wildlife. Coastal environments are important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as tourism and commercial fisheries.

Why Are Coastal Wetlands in Trouble?

Thousands of acres of coastal wetlands have already been lost, and additional acres have been degraded by pollution. The concentration of the U.S. population along the coastal areas is a continuing

source of development pressure. Threats to coastal resources include agricultural and urban run-off, shoreline modification, invasive species, oil spills, residential and commercial development, municipal waste disposal, and over-harvesting of resources.

What Is the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program?

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program was established by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Act) of 1990. Under the program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides matching grants for acquisition, restoration, management or enhancement of coastal wetlands.

Between \$13 million and \$17 million in grants are awarded annually through a nationwide competitive process. Funding for the program comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

Who Can Apply for Grants?

States which border the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific and Great Lakes are eligible. The exception is the State of Louisiana, which has its own coastal wetlands program under the Act (see box below). Also eligible are the Trust Territories and Commonwealths of the United States.



How Does Cost-Sharing Work?

States provide 50 percent of the total costs of the project. However, if the State has established and maintains a special fund for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas or open spaces, the Federal share can be increased to 75 percent. Territories and Commonwealths are not required to share the costs of projects except for Puerto Rico. Federal grants awarded under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program cannot exceed \$1 million for an individual project.

How Are Projects Selected?

The Service's role has been to review, rank, and select projects based on their national importance and to assist State resource agencies in the planning and

Louisiana's Coastal Wetland Program

Louisiana's unique wetland resources have been seriously depleted and degraded. Recognizing this, the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act of 1990 has special provisions for the State of Louisiana. It called for the development of both Restoration and Conservation Plans specifically for Louisiana's wetlands. Since Louisiana's Conservation Plan was approved in 1997 by the Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the State's cost share for wetland projects dropped from 25 percent to 15 percent.

application process. Due to limited funding and considerable demand, projects need to be selected competitively. The Act itself calls for projects to be given priority if they are:

- Consistent with the criteria and considerations outlined in the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.
- Located in States with dedicated funding for programs to acquire coastal wetlands, natural areas and open spaces.
- Located in maritime forests on

coastal barrier islands.

Additional ranking factors that have been developed by the Service include giving credit to projects that benefit threatened and endangered species, encourage cooperative efforts, and benefit other ongoing projects.

What Is Being Accomplished?

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is an effective approach that assists States acquire, restore, manage, and enhance their coastal wetland resources. The program's emphasis on encouraging

partnerships, supporting watershed planning and leveraging on-going projects ensures that the use of limited funds results in maximum benefits.

Three examples of funded projects illustrate its accomplishments (see box below). The lasting results of the program will be the protection and restoration of thousands of acres of coastal wetland ecosystems nationwide. Wildlife and resource-based industries, like tourism and commercial fisheries, will directly benefit.

Examples of Funded Projects

Arcata Baylands Restoration/Enhancement, California

The California State Coastal Conservancy, with assistance from the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Department of Game, will purchase 77 acres of land and restore 85 acres adjacent to Humboldt Bay with its 2006 grant. This restoration will restore tidal flow and reestablish native vegetation. Humboldt Bay is one of California's most important stopovers for migratory birds. Project partners include the City of Arcata and the Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission.

Thomas Island Habitat Protection, Maine

Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife will acquire, in cooperation with the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Ducks Unlimited and an individual landowner, 122 acres, including the 62-acre Thomas Island with its 2006 grant. Thomas Island provides high-quality foraging, migratory, breeding and wintering habitat for a long list of bird species.

Qwuloolt Project, Phase IV--Estuarine Restoration, Washington

The Department of Ecology in Washington State will use its 2006 grant to remove segments of a dike in the lower Snohomish River watershed. This project will restore about 390 acres of intertidal estuarine wetlands, benefiting the threatened Puget Sound chinook salmon and other fish species. Partners include the Tulalip Tribes and the City of Maryville.



For more information about the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration, Branch of Habitat Restoration at (703/358 2201) or the Division of Federal Assistance (703/358 2156), or visit us on the Internet at: <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
800/344 Wild
<http://www.fws.gov>

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